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STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR, I/GNEA, B/BXN,
B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON PALESTINIAN GOVERNANCE

Editorial Commentary

-- "It is then the civil war"

Columnist Mohammad Kharroub writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (10/02): "Do not believe the big lie that people of factions are marketing about the fact that Palestinian blood is sacred and cannot be shed by Palestinians. Nothing is sacred for these people except the interests of the faction or movement. As for the Palestinian national project that is now threatened by elimination and obliteration, it is worthless; and as for the sacrifices and memory of hundreds of thousands of martyrs, they are just rituals, speech rallies and ceremonies to charge emotions and recruit proponents.... Something can be realized from the Gaza events yesterday that are likely to escalate to a point of a real disaster. There is no need to be smart and use expressions and terminology to define the situation other than it is the beginning of a civil war chosen by those who resorted to disbanding protests and strikes by force.... No one will succeed in this confrontation. The situation will not settle even if the Palestinian Interior Ministry's force was able to control the streets. It is a political crisis par excellence and any attempts to change the titles or the reasons are doomed to fail, because they only aim to postpone the crisis since both parties, Fatah and Hamas, have lost the ability to provide practical approaches for bringing out the Palestinian people and their national project into the daylight.... Are the Gaza events related to the visit of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice? Are the people who started the fire sending a message of sorts to all those concerned in the region as they prepare for the launch of a 'new regional' policy."

-- "The morning of the disaster"

Columnist Hayat Al-Howaik Attiyeh writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Ad-Dustour (10/02): "The old Israeli dream of stirring a Palestinian civil war is coming true. What could be better for Israel than this...? True, the people are tired of the siege, and true, the government cannot just let protestors close down roads and impede daily life. But let us say it like it is. It is not the first time that the Palestinians suffer from a siege and from the lack of resources; they have suffered much more. It is not the first time that movement in the streets was blocked; it has been blocked worse in the past. This is then a purely political matter, the issue of abidance by the American-Israeli conditions or the ousting of the Hamas government if the rejection continues. This is what has impeded the

establishment of a national unity government and the delivery of collected, which could have been delivered through the Palestinian President. The fact they were not delivered means only one thing, namely that the Palestinian President and his people do not want to ease the pressure off the Hamas government. The result is that Israel is going to be able to invade Gaza and put an end to the issues of the kidnapped soldier and the rockets, which will give the [Palestinian] government back some popularity and Israel some of its stature."

HALE